

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

—
Frederick D. Kershner

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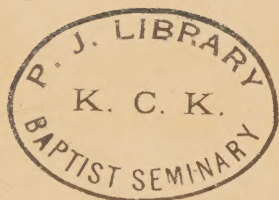


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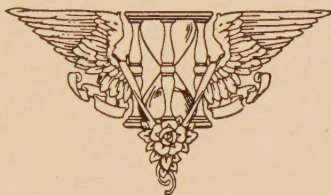
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CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

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Baptism

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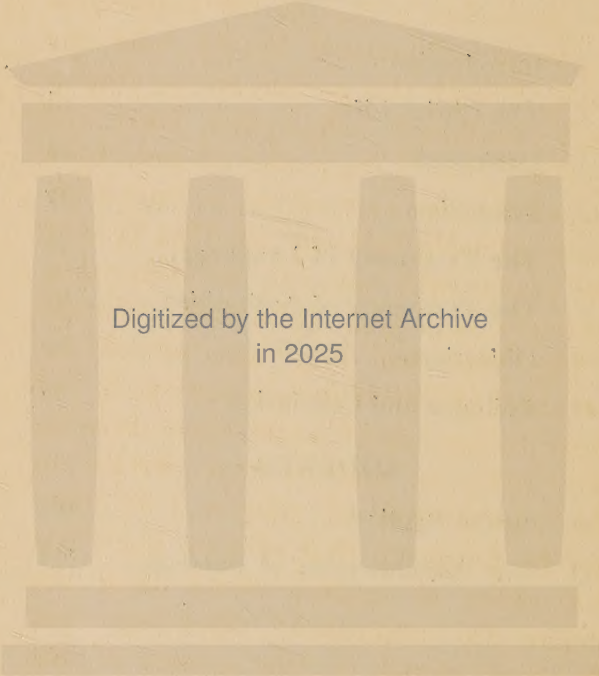
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INTRODUCTION

I am glad to stand in the gateway of this little book and to say to the reader as he approaches it that he has before him a garden of unusual beauty, and the guide through this garden has so charmingly combined scholarship, truth and courtesy, that if the reader dissents from any of the views expressed, he cannot become offended and, for all that is said, the reader will have, if not conviction, certainly both admiration and gratitude.

The time has long ago passed for members of Christian communions to say hard things about each other because they differ in matters that pertain to the explanation of religion. It must not be forgotten that religion itself has not often in modern times been the theme for unpleasant discussion, but theology, which is the science of the fact of religion, has been; and far too much unkindness has filled theological controversies, which has been detri-



mental both to the believer and to the theology which he believes, but the times have changed. The summer of thought is here and the adjustment of these differences is now very much more hopeful. Catholicity of spirit is supplanting prejudice, truth is mastering error, goodness, like an ocean tide, is rising in the hearts of faith, and God's program will be fulfilled as sure as the flower in the warm, moist atmosphere of summer comes into full bloom.

This book is a most valuable contribution to a long discussed subject. It will be read with keen interest. The author is one of the most gifted souls in the educational circles of America. Out of several conferences between the Christian Unity Foundation of the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Commission on Christian Union of the Disciples of Christ, this brief treatise on Christian Baptism was read at a joint meeting in New York City April 24, 1912, when it was most kindly received with a request

for its publication. You are invited into the perusal of this brochure with the prayer that God's blessing may attend its mission.

PETER AINSLIE,

*President Commission on Christian
Union of the Disciples of Christ.*

Baltimore, Md., June 4, 1912.

I
THE CHRIST LIFE

I

THE CHRIST LIFE

Two significant statements dealing with the heart and core of religion are to be found in the New Testament. The first is that superb picture of the Young Ruler "running" to the Master in his eagerness to find the way to Eternal Life; and the second is the famous definition recorded in the last verse of the Epistle of Saint James. Both statements agree in all essential particulars, and the two comprehend in large measure the characteristics of the Gospel of Christ.

In the answer given to the youth who sought for Eternal Life, but who after all did not desire it quite so badly as his money, the Supreme Teacher has embodied the ultimate character of His message. First, the note of individual righteousness and purity embodied in obedience to the Commandments; and second, the note of social service and love embodied in the advice to sell all

and give the proceeds to the poor. James reverses the order of his Master, but retains His definition. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father" with him has first, its side of social service—"to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction"—and second, the note of personal righteousness and purity—"to keep himself unspotted from the world."

However we may look at it from the viewpoint of dogma, or mysticism, or philosophy, the significance of Christianity has remained always the same. No matter how divergent the creed, no matter how strange the language or the custom, at bottom we somehow recognize the presence of the Master in the life which has embodied the Master's ideals, and which has re-created, as it were, the Master in its own little way. The ultimate test of a Christian remains therefore the Pauline test, the presence of the Spirit of Christ; and the presence of the Spirit is determined ultimately in the

Pauline way, by its fruits, the triple trinity of the fifth chapter of Galatians.

Nothing in what is written here would subtract for a moment from the significance of ordinance or symbol or form, or from the value or function of the church as an institution. All that is intended is to give church and life alike the proper place of each, and to avoid mistaking what is a means for an end, or an end for a means. Every ordinance, every symbol, every function of the church points to Christ, and has no significance apart from Him. Moreover the Christ to which they point is not the dead Christ, not even the historical or the mystical Christ, but ever the living Christ, the Christ desiring embodiment in your life and my life, and forever seeking realization in those who wear His name.

To be a Christian, therefore, is fundamentally to realize Christ. It is to fashion out of the stubborn and rebellious elements in our natural endowment the pure and spotless features of the Di-

vine Life. It is to build up out of the natural man the spiritual man, and to crucify the flesh, if need be, that the soul may live.

To those who can find among Christ's true disciples and followers only Christians who adhered or adhere to a particular creed or sect or party, of course these words will not seem significant. To such perchance the definition of a Christian is of that character which pertains to the outward robe or habit rather than the inward heart or life. Conformity to dogma rather than purity of soul will seem to them the ultimate test. But our Master placed the emphasis always, it would seem, upon the life rather than the formal accuracy of creed or party. Significantly enough, He brushed aside the Sabbath day restrictions of the strict legalists of His time, before the demands of mercy and love. Always, on the contrary, he demanded purity of soul, humility of spirit, a repentance that cut deep enough, as in the case of Zaccheus, to

touch the very abysmal depths of the heart. The ultimate test with Him was, How far has the soul realized and made its own the great ideals of Eternal Truth; how far has it learned to be humble, to be reverent, to be pure, to sacrifice, to serve, to be like the Father from whom all life, that is life indeed, must come?

Nor was Christ's test of value, in any significant sense, at least, of a mystical cast or character. That there is a mystical element closely related to it, perhaps a part of it, no student of Church History, nor for that matter, of the Scripture narratives themselves, can well deny. The fundamental thing about it all was, however, its dominantly ethical note, its supreme emphasis upon the good life, its abiding realization that the only pure gold is after all the gold of Christian character.

The place of the mystical and the ethical in the new system was well characterized by Paul, the great interpreter of Christ's message, in that climactic

chapter of all his writings, the thirteenth of First Corinthians. Beyond the "speaking with tongues," the "prophesying," and all the miraculous and mystical powers of the Apostolic days, he placed that unselfish love which is ever the center and core of all true Christian character. The "more excellent way" was the way of the pure life, the ethical way, if we may so style it, the daily realization of the ideal of unselfish service to humanity.

If one wishes to fully realize how large a part of the Christ life, that is to say, the goal of Christian character and purity, occupied in the thought of Paul, let him only underscore the passages which deal with it in the Epistles. Church rites and forms will be seen at once to take a very subsidiary place. The philosophy of the new movement did indeed frequently occupy the attention of the writer; but even in his profoundest speculations, the practical note is always present as an under-current — witness Romans and Ephesians for example. And what is

true of Paul is even more true of the Gospels themselves. There is scarcely any formal theology in them; but the emphasis is constantly placed upon the daily life, and walk, and conversation of those who would find the way into the Heavenly Kingdom and be at rest. The Judgment scene in the twenty-fifth chapter of Saint Matthew is only the culmination of an unbroken series of teachings stretching from Nazareth to Calvary.

Fundamentally, then, the goal of the Christian religion is ever the Christian life, the life which realizes most nearly the ideals of Christ, the life which strives to embody Him as He embodied the Father in all He did while He was upon the earth. Surely we recognize this to be true in the unconscious tribute we pay to those of divergent creeds and belief, who were yet Christian in life. Who, for example, however much he may disregard the dogmas which the gentle Francis of Assisi believed, would deny to him the name of a Christian? In that

sweet life of service which was so much like his Master's, we instinctively recognize the true and infallible test of the disciple of our Lord. And what is true of Francis is true of countless others of different dogmas and professions, who, like him, realized, in a measure, the Christ whose name they claimed to wear.

After all, it is true that there is but one church. That church, however, is an invisible church. It is made up of the redeemed of all nations and tribes and lands, all those who have taken Christ into their hearts and have realized Him in their lives. Well might it be if the external church could coincide with this invisible church. The mission of every true Christian is to pray and strive and agonize, if need be, that it shall thus become. On this altar may we not sacrifice all vainglory, all selfish pride, all motives of interest or prejudice or ambition, and pray as our Master taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come?"

Recognizing then the Christ life as the

supreme goal and end of our religion, there naturally arises the question as to how this goal may be realized. An end with no means is an absurdity; and a goal, however beautiful, with no path by which to reach it, is useless and vain. Hence arises the whole problem of church organization and relations, the problem of formal religion, as we sometimes style it. Men need, nay must have, the church in order to develop the Christ life; and this which is true of the individual is even more overwhelmingly true of the world at large. The church with its ordinances, its regular appointments for worship, its significant and impressive symbolism, affords the only possible means for the extension and preservation of vital Christianity. It does not lessen the value of the church to give it its proper place. On the contrary, it may do great harm to assign it a place foreign to its true function. Much of church history is but a sad commentary upon the results of attempting to convert the

means into the end, and to substitute ecclesiastical and formal functions for the supreme realities of the Christian life. Well, indeed, may we repeat the words of the Psalmist: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And yet David sacrificed burnt offerings, and they were accepted when offered in the right way. Formal religion has therefore a place in the divine economy, even though that place can never become a substitute for the life of service and love. And the question of the proper position and function of formal religion carries with it the whole subject of ordinance.

II
ORDINANCE

II

ORDINANCE

As the body needs its skeleton, the organized government its constitution, and the discourse, whether written or spoken, its outline or plan, so the church demands some simple framework to serve as the definite means for the extension and propagation of vital Christianity. This framework is largely embodied in the idea of ordinance. The ordinances of the church may therefore be said to make up its formal constitution. The simplicity of this constitution is very apparent when we observe that it includes only two features. The one is the initiatory rite known as baptism; the other, the perpetual sacrament known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. The one marks off in a definite, external and specific way the entrance of the believer into the Christian communion; the other keeps constantly, from the day of that entrance down to the day of death, the

great central facts of his religion before the mind of the Christian.

There is the strongest psychological reason for the existence of such an ordinance as baptism, aside from its place in the constitution of the church. When an individual is convinced of the truthfulness of Christ's message, when he earnestly repents of his past sinful life, when the internal change of will which is the first and fundamental factor in his conversion has taken place, then a true psychology demands that his feelings and belief should find some definite form of external expression. This form should be explicit, solemn, and of such a character as to be impressive, and yet simple enough to admit of wide adaptation. It should possess an easily understood meaning, but one of deep significance as well. In short, it should be psychologically just what it actually is in the objective framework of the church.

If we understand baptism as the initiatory ordinance of Christianity, and that

obedience to the ordinance is therefore necessary before becoming at least in the fullest formal sense a Christian, we understand readily enough the significance attached to it in the New Testament narratives throughout. Practically everywhere baptism is linked with conversion, and there is nowhere in the Scriptures where there is even a hint of anyone claiming to be a Christian who was not baptized. Philip had no hesitancy in baptizing the Eunuch immediately upon his profession of faith in Christ; Paul baptized the Philippian Jailer the same hour of the night; Peter insisted upon prompt baptism for the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost; and Paul, despite his miraculous conversion, was baptized, as soon as he regained his sight, by Ananias of Damascus. The idea that baptism does not constitute an essential step in entrance upon Christian fellowship finds no comfort in the pages of revelation.

To those who adhere to what may be termed a distinctly mechanical theology, the ordinance occupies a still more important place. Coupled with the remission of sins on the day of Pentecost and elsewhere, it becomes a manifest condition of salvation. Often, on this account, baptism is esteemed more significant than even the possession of the Christian virtues and graces. To be baptized becomes the *sine qua non* of salvation; and having been baptized, too often there is little else apparently which demands attention. The danger of such a legalistic view-point requires little emphasis or explanation. Baptism, however indispensable as a condition of formal admission to the church of Christ, carries with it no such miraculous power as will perform the impossible transmutation of an external rite into an element of Christian character. The obedience which prompted submission to the ordinance is indeed an element in character development and must receive full value as such; but no

religious rite possesses significance, save as a means to an end, independent of itself. To be a Christian, in the full and complete sense of the term, one must be baptized; but one may easily be baptized, at least in the formal sense, and never be a Christian. ✓

The place of baptism as the initiatory ordinance of the church becomes therefore exceedingly simple and easy to understand. The last step in conversion, the expression in action of the volitional acceptance of the creed, the symbol of an earnest and honest stepping across from an old life to a new life, the seal of a sincere determination to embody the Christ ideals from day to day, its value and position, are at once apparent. No Christian can afford to slur or slight such an ordinance any more than he can afford to make of it more than it claims of itself to be. There is no conceivable reason, short of physical impossibility, which a man claiming to be a Christian can give for not being baptized. To re-

fuse obedience to a law and at the same time pretend to respect and serve the law-giver is contradictory and absurd. That baptism is not everything in the Christian religion is no more true than the fact that it possesses a value and significance which demand consideration and respect.

The baptismal controversies among Christian communions have been largely caused by misunderstandings concerning the significance of the ordinance, and by confusion regarding the respective places of vital and formal Christianity. Baptism has been forced at times into a place where its real significance is misunderstood, and on this account has been attacked and belittled by those who recognize the distortion, but apparently see nothing more. When the ordinance is given its true and rightful place, however, and when no more is claimed for it than Christ or the Apostles claimed, it would seem that there should be no more need for controversy. No man who

loves the Master and who desires to enter His service will, for a moment, think of disregarding a command which is manifestly and patently His own. That the Christ demanded baptism of those who would enter His church is one of the clearest truisms in the New Testament. That the Apostles required the same thing is equally clear. That the thing demanded is fundamentally reasonable and indeed necessary is likewise plain, if an honest and impartial investigation is made. It is no more certain, therefore, that citizenship in a new country requires an oath of allegiance to the authorities or sovereign than it is that to be a true follower of Christ and a member of His church requires obedience to the ordinance of baptism. That attitude which would refuse obedience would in itself be *prima facie* evidence that the heart of the professed penitent is not right. Otherwise, obedience would flow from it as naturally as the mountain spring gushes from its source on the hill-top.

The necessity and value of baptism as an ordinance leads to a further consideration of its symbolic character. It is certainly conceivable that an ordinance, as such, does not demand the symbolic feature; but it is manifest that such a feature adds greatly to the significance and impressiveness of the ordinance. Granted the value of the symbolic reference, granted also the possibility of easily securing it, and its presence would seem to be almost infallibly predicated. In other words, while the Founder of the Christian religion might have selected any form of obedience to serve as the overt and initiatory rite admitting men to His church, it is none the less true that the rite which would most impressively symbolize the central fact or facts in His system would be the rite which we should expect Him to choose. Blind obedience is good, as far as it goes; but a reasoned obedience brings forth far more of the richest treasures of the soul and is better. The religion of Jesus

Christ is fundamentally and always a reasonable religion. That it transcends human reason may well be admitted, but at no point does transcendence ever involve contradiction; and nowhere is its reasonableness better illustrated than in the symbolic features of the Christian ordinances.

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III

SYMBOLISM

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SYMBOLISM

From what has been written already, the manifest probability of a symbolical character attaching to the ordinance of baptism, is, we take it, sufficiently clear. It seems proper that at this point our appeal should be made directly to the Scriptures themselves, in order that they may sustain or disprove the antecedent probability of the symbolism indicated. The inquiry may be, in all fairness, limited to the New Testament. This is not to infer that prophetic evidence of value may not be found in the Old; but inasmuch as the New contains the only full and detailed account of the Christian religion, any impression produced by a careful study of the evidence which is therein presented could only be confirmed by the Old. That it should be contradicted by the latter is a manifest impossibility; for were such a thing involved in the study, its only effect would

be to discredit all testimony upon the subject. There exists no necessity therefore for our pursuing our inquiry beyond the limits of the New Testament.

Perhaps the most significant symbolic reference to baptism in the Scriptures is that contained in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. The passage in full reads as follows:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

Obviously the symbolism of the initiatory rite of Christianity is very fully and beautifully expressed in these words. In the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the great Apostle to

the Gentiles characterizes the Gospel briefly as the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If then the central facts in the Gospel are death, burial and resurrection, and if these are all expressed in the act of baptism, as the Epistle to the Romans declares, no more fitting or beautiful symbolism could be imagined. Baptism thus becomes in its very action a profession of faith in the great central facts of the religion which it represents.

It is noticeable, moreover, that there is another feature contained in the passage quoted above which is worthy of careful attention. Not only does baptism fittingly symbolize the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Christ Himself, but it likewise symbolizes the essential experience which every convert must pass through in order to become a Christian. Fundamentally this experience means a death to the old life of sin, and a resurrection to the new life of righteousness, of freedom, and of service in

the glorious sunlight of the Christ. Evidently the Apostle had this in mind, when he spoke of walking "in newness of life," while the argument of the context is largely, if not entirely, based upon the same idea. We have buried the old life, is the thought, and have arisen to walk in the new.

There is still another, perhaps more remote but none the less beautiful, symbolism suggested in the Scripture quoted above, which appeals with peculiar power to every human being. There must come a time in the experience of all when the Valley of the Shadow is reached and when earthly life is no more. In the presence of that hour, how consoling the reflection that in the solemn rite of baptism there was symbolized for us not only that death and burial which we share with the Christ, but likewise the glorious resurrection which is His gift to us and to all who follow Him.

Whether, therefore, we consider the matter from what we may style the reli-

gious, the ethical, or the personal point of view, the symbolism of the ordinance remains equally beautiful and impressive. No man who understands the significance of this symbolism can be other than solemn in its presence. No ceremony in the world is quite so impressive as a true baptism. How much it means, how simple it all is, and yet how profound! The Divine wisdom is assuredly manifest in the establishment of such an ordinance.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, there is a similar symbolic reference. The passage referred to is found in the second chapter and from the eleventh to the thirteenth verse inclusive:

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”

Very clearly here the symbolical character of the ordinance is manifest. Again we are “buried with him,” and again we are “risen with him.” Death, burial, resurrection—without these there is no Christian religion, and these are all embodied in the ordinance of baptism.

In the third chapter of the Gospel of Saint John, in the famous conversation with Nicodemus dealing with the subject of the New Birth, the language is used with which we are all so familiar: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” There seems to be very little doubt that these words refer to baptism. Perhaps the emphasis is intended to be placed on the spiritual rather than the formal element in the terms of admission to the new kingdom; but the symbolism is still one of a birth

to a new life, and a death to an old one. To be born of water and of the spirit, as in the Epistle to the Romans, is to rise from the baptismal grave to walk henceforth in newness of life.*

It would seem that the passages quoted above should be sufficient to indicate the expressive symbolism of the initiatory ordinance of the church of Christ. That which we have been led to expect

*Two objections are sometimes interposed to the above interpretation of Romans and Colossians. The first is that the passage has no reference to an external act, while the second says that the external act involved in ancient burial possessed no likeness to immersion. To the first it may be replied that the spiritual content does not disprove the external reference, while to do away with the latter is to break the obvious force of the entire passage. So clearly is this true that, whatever their opinions upon baptism in general may have been, the great bulk of commentators have agreed in accepting the interpretation as given by Dr. Chalmers. In reply to the second, it need only be mentioned that while burial has involved different forms and ceremonies at different times in the history of the world, yet in general, whether the sepulchre was of earth or rock, the idea of a tomb, a burial, and a resurrection with the Jews was substantially the same idea as our own upon the subject. Here again the commentators are practically agreed, as we have noted above.

from a psychological point of view, we find the Scriptural writers asserting from the point of view of fact. Could Paul have been mistaken when he referred to the ordinance as he did? And even though it may be possible, as is possible no matter how plain a passage may be, to so interpret these significant words of Romans and Colossians as to change their apparently obvious meaning in order to advance a particular theological theory, is it well that such a thing should be done? It is significant that the great majority of commentators upon these passages find it impossible to make such a change. To merely recite the names of those who belong to this class would be tedious. The list includes among others, Grotius, Beza, Bloomfield, Koppe, Rosemuller, Calvin, Locke, Barnes, Wesley, Whitefield, Whitby, Wall, Tillotson, Secker, Clarke, Wells, Nicholson, Doddridge, Mac-knight, and Chalmers. The language of the last named is typical of all the rest:

“The original meaning of the word *baptism* is immersion; and, though we regard it as a point of indifferency, whether the ordinance so named be performed in this way or by sprinkling, yet we doubt not that the prevalent style of the administration in the Apostles’ days was by an actual submerging of the whole body under water. We advert to this for the purpose of throwing light on the analogy that is instituted in these verses. Jesus Christ, by death, underwent this sort of baptism by an immersion under the surface of the ground, whence he soon emerged again by his resurrection. We, by being baptized into his death, are conceived to have made a similar translation—in the act of descending under the water of baptism to have resigned an old life, and in the act of ascending to emerge into a second or new life—along the course of which it is our part to maintain a strenuous avoidance of that sin which as good as expunged the being we had

formerly; and a strenuous prosecution of that holiness which should begin with the first moment that we were ushered into our present being, and be perpetuated and made progress toward the perfection of full and ripened immortality.” —Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, chapter vi:4.

The symbolical character of the ordinance of baptism is therefore indicated at least with sufficient clearness to establish a presumption from the New Testament. The authorities already quoted would seem to demand this much consideration. It is readily and gladly conceded that further investigation may invalidate or destroy the presumption referred to, but for the present it is surely fair to at least concede the presumption. More than this we do not ask at the present juncture.

IV

THE TESTIMONY OF LANGUAGE

IV

THE TESTIMONY OF LANGUAGE

From what has been written, it will be observed that the symbolism of the New Testament interprets the ordinance of baptism in a very specific and definite way. Embodying the great central facts of the Christian religion, the death, burial and resurrection of its Founder, pointing directly toward the moral and ethical change in the individual which is characteristic of every true conversion, and casting a halo of hope and light over the tomb which yawns before each Christian, no further explanation would seem to be required. In the absence of contradictory testimony, surely the presumption afforded by the symbolic evidence as to the character of baptism should be of the highest significance. It must be conceded, however, that in the presence of contradictory material, the strongest presumptive argument becomes almost if not entirely valueless.

It is, therefore, right and proper to inquire if there is any contradictory evidence to disprove the presumption afforded by the passages already quoted from the Epistles to the Colossians and the Romans, and by the symbolic view of the ordinance, throughout.

First perhaps among such possible evidence would be that drawn from the direct meaning of the term itself. Baptism, as is well known, is a word transferred almost bodily from another language, and it is therefore exceedingly important that its significance in the language from which it has been transferred should be fully understood. It is not the purpose of the writer to give an elaborate resume of the philological battles which have been fought over the meaning of the Greek βαπτίζω, or of any of its derivatives. With the presumption already established by the symbolical argument, all that we care to discover is whether there is anything in the original meaning of the word which will seri-

ously dissipate that presumption. This much would seem to be no especially difficult task to accomplish. The root meaning of βαπτίζω is almost universally conceded to be the idea involved in submerging or plunging. If there is any reputable Greek lexicon which takes an opposite position, we have yet to be informed of its existence. There are lexicons which give as secondary or derivative meanings, to *wash*, to *cleanse*, and the like; but these meanings are at no times incompatible with the idea of submersion. The word is found quite frequently in ancient writers outside of the New Testament, such as Lucian, Plutarch, Strabo, Polybius, and Epictetus. In all cases where it is found the meaning is either to "*submerge*" or, at the farthest something which does not in the slightest measure contradict the idea of "*submerge*." Occasionally βάπτω, βαπτίζω, and kindred words may be rendered to *wash*, to *dye*, or to *cleanse*; but as washing, dyeing, and cleansing may all be

performed by submersion, and in fact usually are so, there is nothing which precludes the meaning indicated.

It may be said, however, that the classical use and the New Testament use of the word are two different things, and that no valid argument may therefore be drawn from the former as applying to the latter. Were this true, and it is admitted that it may be true, still the burden of proof that the meaning in the New Testament *is* really different from the meaning in classical Greek would seem to lie with those making the assertion. No proof to this effect has so far been produced. On the contrary the word as used in the New Testament is perfectly in harmony with its context when rendered *submerge*, and at no time does the meaning appear strained or forced. The word *baptism*, or in the original *βάπτισμα*, occurs twenty-two times in the New Testament. The other related words occur a little over one hundred times.

In no case will it do violence to the context to interpret the word given in the text with the idea involved in *submerge* or *immerse*.

It would not only be tedious but the writer deems altogether profitless to present any elaborate analysis of passages proving the facts just stated. Such tabulations have been prepared frequently and may be easily worked out by anyone possessing a New Testament, in either the English or the Greek. As already stated, so far as we know, there is practically no dispute among lexicographers in regard to the position that to plunge or to immerse involves the primary meaning in the Greek word βαπτίζω. It is claimed by some that other meanings may also attach to the word, but even then there is practically no denial of the root or primary meaning of the word.

The problem with us at this point, it should be remembered, is not whether there is any other possible or permissible meaning for βαπτίζω than the one

suggested by the symbolic significance of the ordinance. On the contrary, we have been trying to discover whether the meaning is such as to impair the presumptive evidence already established. Making every possible allowance, it is certainly true that there is nothing in the literal meaning of the word, either in its original or in its derived form, which will justify overthrowing the presumption. If anything, it is strengthened by an appeal to the linguistic argument, rather than the reverse. Baptism can always be translated *submerge* without doing violence to the context. Whether it may not also, at least at times, be translated otherwise, is, at the most, an open question. However, the latter question may be decided, the presumptive evidence derived from the symbolic significance of the ordinance remains unimpaired, and this alone constitutes the inquiry toward which our attention has been directed.

A second item of evidence would be that derived from the translation of the

original word into other languages. The Greek βαπτίζω, as we have noted, is not translated in our English Bibles, but simply transferred. In many other languages, however, it is translated. In substantially all cases where this is done, the word used is one which signifies to immerse or plunge, in the language in question. An exception to this rule is that of the Slavonic dialects where the word *krestiti*, meaning to make the sign of the cross, or to cross, is used. As is well known, however, the Slavonic peoples almost universally immerse, so that there is no real change of meaning understood. Among the languages to which reference has been made are the following: Arabic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Coptic, Armenian, Gothic, and early Latin. In some cases the word used may mean wash or cleanse as well as immerse or plunge, but the latter is the primary meaning. As is commonly known, the Anglo-Saxon terms used, "*dyppan*" and "*fullian*," have the idea of both dip and

cleanse. The Icelandic word "*skira*" means also to cleanse, and the Persian word *shustan* has the idea of washing or cleansing. In none of these cases, however, with the exception of the Slavonic, is there any contradiction of the idea of immerse, while in the great majority of cases the word used is one which means directly to submerge or plunge.

There is, therefore, no argument to be derived from translations of the word βαπτίζω into languages other than the English, which will in the slightest measure invalidate the presumption based upon the symbolic significance of the term.

A third argument may be derived from an examination of English translations. Should an English version be found in which the word βαπτίζω is rendered in such a way as to contradict the idea of submersion, value might attach to such a discovery. A careful survey of all the versions published in English, which the writer has been able

to secure or inspect, has not revealed a single instance in which the word is rendered in such a manner. Among the editions included are those of Wicklif, Tyndale, Cranmer, Geneva, Anglo-Rhemish, and a host of lesser known versions. A few of the latter render βαπτίζω directly immerse, but the overwhelming majority simply transfer the word from the Greek into English. There is therefore nothing whatever in any English rendering to interfere with the antecedent presumption already indicated.

Much more might be written upon this phase of the question, but to do so would seem scarcely profitable or necessary. We deprecate exceedingly the unfortunate discussions which have arisen among Christians in regard to the ordinance of baptism. Everything written in this brief study is written in the spirit of charity and with a simple desire to state the truth as the author sees it. No criticism in even the slightest measure, upon any

communion or any individual, is intended. A statement of fact, if made in the courteous spirit, ought never to be deemed uncharitable. If the writer has erred in the position taken, he will be the most grateful of all men to be shown clearly and unmistakably the error of his way.

V.

THE TESTIMONY OF AUTHORITIES

V

THE TESTIMONY OF AUTHORITIES

There is a very full and complete recognition on the part of all, we take it, that the mere quotation of authority is of little value in discussing a question such as that of baptism. Authorities, it may be said at once, are divided; and, as is sometimes the case with the introduction of expert testimony in criminal trials, the value of the one witness is fully out-weighed by the evidence presented by the other. None the less, the preponderance of authority must carry some significance with it, and where there is a very great preponderance it would seem that it should have not a little to do with settling the question in the minds of most people. There are certain men whom we respect both for their scholarship and for their integrity; and the convictions of these men, while not conclusive as argument for us, will

nevertheless have deserved weight in helping us to reach our own decision.

When one consults authorities in regard to the question of baptism he finds the situation something like the following: A large majority agree that the ordinance was originally performed by immersion; a much smaller number think that it may have been performed in some other way, as well as by immersion; and a still smaller number assert that it actually was performed in some other manner at times. All, however, substantially agree that immersion certainly represents *an* original, if not *the* original, mode.

It is to be noted, of course, that very many of those who assert, in the strongest terms, that immersion was the original mode were not themselves immersed. Their reasons for this action have been, for the most part, that they did not consider the mode to be of special significance and that the church in later times had power to change it. The destruc-

tion of the fundamental symbolism involved in the ordinance does not seem to have occurred to men of this class.

We shall not presume to cite even the names of a large number of authorities; the testimony of a few, however, may be of some value.

The language of the early church fathers, while not at all times specific, decidedly favors the view that they practiced immersion. Barnabas, one of the oldest of them, writes: "We indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up, bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear of God and trust in Jesus in our spirit."*

The First Apology of Justin, written about A. D. 140, gives the following under the section entitled Christian Baptism:

"I will also relate the manner in which

*Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter xi. (It must be acknowledged that the Epistle of Barnabas is of quite uncertain authorship. It is, at any rate, however, of very considerable antiquity.)

we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that which we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing in (or with) water. For Christ also said, 'Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' **

Tertullian, about A. D. 204, uses the following language: "There is no difference, whether one is washed in a sea or

*First Apology of Justin, Chapter lxi.

in a pool, in a river or in a fountain, in a lake or in a channel; nor is there any difference between them whom John dipped in the Jordan and those whom Peter dipped in the Tiber."

Origen writes thus in his commentary on Matthew: Man, therefore, through this washing is buried with Christ, is regenerated."

Chrysostom, in commenting upon the language of St. Paul in regard to baptism, says: "To be baptized and plunged, and then to emerge or rise again, is a symbol of our descent into the grave, and our ascent out of it; and therefore Paul calls baptism a burial."

Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem, John of Damascus, and others of the Fathers, use similar language. Eusebius writing of Novatian, about 251 A. D., says: "Being delivered by the exorcists, he fell into a severe sickness; and as he seemed about to die, he received baptism by affusion, on the

bed where he lay; if indeed we can say that such a one did receive it.”*

Dr. A. C. McGiffert, in commenting upon Novatian’s baptism, says: “Clinic baptism was ordinarily looked upon in the early church, in which immersion was the common mode of baptism, as permanently debarring a person from the presbyterate, and by many persons it was denied that such baptism was baptism at all. The latter opinion, however, the church failed to sustain.”**

It would seem indeed to be reasonably clear that the custom of affusion was of post-apostolic origin; and most ecclesiastical writers take this view. Neander, for example, writes: “Baptism was originally administered by immersion; and many of the comparisons of St. Paul allude to this form of its administration.” Mosheim in referring to the history of the church in the first century A. D. says

*Eusebius’ Church History, Book VI, Chapter xliii.

**Notes on Eusebius’ Church History, Book VI. Schaff and Wace edition of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

unequivocally: "The sacrament of baptism was administered in this century, without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for the purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font." The same writer in speaking of the custom in vogue during the second century A. D. uses this language: "The sacrament of baptism was administered publicly twice every year, at the festivals of Easter and Pentecost or Whitsuntide, either by the bishop or the presbyters in consequence of his authorization and appointment. The persons that were to be baptized, after they had repeated the creed, confessed and renounced their sins, and particularly the devil and his pompous allurements, were immersed under water, and received into Christ's kingdom by a solemn invocation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, according to the express command of our blessed Lord. After baptism they received the sign of the cross, were anointed, and, by prayers and impo-

sitions of hands, were solemnly commended to the mercy of God, and dedicated to his service; in consequence of which they received the milk and honey, which concluded the ceremony. The reasons of this particular ritual coincide with what we have said in general, concerning the origin and causes of the multiplied ceremonies that crept, from time to time, into the church."

Dr. Wall in his *History of Infant Baptism*, writes thus in regard to the introduction of affusion as baptism:

"France seems to have been the first country in the world where baptism by affusion was used ordinarily to persons in health, and in the public way of administering it. They (the Assembly of Divines at Westminster) reformed the font into a basin. This learned Assembly could not remember that fonts to baptize in had been always used by the primitive Christians long before the beginning of Popery, and ever since churches were built; but that sprinkling,

for the common use of baptizing, was really introduced (in France first, and then in other Popish countries) in times of Popery. And that accordingly all those countries in which the usurped power of the Pope is, or has formerly been owned, have left off dipping of children in the font; but that all other countries in the world, which had never regarded his authority, do still use it, and that basins, except in case of necessity, were never used by Papist, or any other Christians whatsoever, till by themselves. What has been said of this custom of pouring or sprinkling water in the ordinary use of baptism, is to be understood only in reference to these Western parts of Europe; for it is used ordinarily nowhere else. The Greek Church, in all the branches of it, does still use immersion; and they hardly count a child, except in case of sickness, well baptized without it. And so do all other Christians in the world, except the Latins. That which I hinted before, is

a rule that does not fail in any particular that I know of, viz.—All the nations of Christians that do now or formerly did submit to the authority of the Bishop of Rome, do ordinarily baptize their infants by pouring or sprinkling. And though the English received not this custom till after the decay of Popery, yet they have since received it from such neighboring nations as had begun in the time of the Pope's power. But all other Christians in the world, who never owned the Pope's usurped power, do, and ever did, dip their infants in the ordinary use."*

Dr. Wall, in accordance with the usage of his times, is perhaps a little less courteous in some of his expressions than we should like to see today. Nevertheless, a careful survey of the facts will indicate that the conclusions reached in the above quotation are not far from correct. Wall is by no means the only authority of his church who favored the primitive method of immersion. Whitby, Usher,

*History of Infant Baptism, Part II, Chapter ix.

Taylor, Walker, Towerson, and a host of others took substantially the same position. The chief opposition to immersion as the action of baptism has indeed come, in modern times, from Geneva. This seems a trifle peculiar, in view of the fact that Calvin himself is on record as saying: "The word *βαπτίζω*" signifies to immerse and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."* Calvin's view of the subject, however, was tinged by other considerations. He had, nonetheless, no hesitancy in expressing his convictions in regard to the original mode. Dr. Wall regarded the Calvinistic movement as largely responsible for the change, in ordinary practise, of the church of England from immersion to affusion. He says:

"As the Puritan party brought in this alteration, so they are very tenacious of it; and as in other church matters, so in this particularly, they seem to have a set-

*Institutes **b**, 4:5; 15.

tled antipathy against the retrieving of the ancient customs. Calvin was, I think, (as I said in my book) the first in the world that drew up a form of liturgy that prescribed pouring water on the infant, absolutely, without saying anything of dipping. It was his admirers in England, who in Queen Elizabeth's time brought pouring in ordinary use, which was before used only to weak children. But the succeeding Presbyterians in England, about the year 1644 (when their reign began), went farther yet from the ancient way, and instead of pouring brought into use in many places sprinkling, declaring at the same time against all use of fonts, baptisteries, godfathers, or anything that looked like the ancient way of baptizing. And as they brought the use of the other sacrament to a great and shameful infrequency (which it is found difficult to this day to reform) so they brought this of baptism into a great disregard."

Luther agreed entirely with Calvin as

regards the original mode of baptism, although, as was the case with the reformer of Geneva, the Lutherans did not embody their leader's view of the original character of the ordinance in actual practice. Luther writes as follows:

“Baptism is a Greek word, and may be translated immersion, as when we immerse something in water, that it may be wholly covered. And although it is almost wholly abolished (for they do not dip the whole children, but only pour a little water on them), they ought nevertheless to be wholly immersed, and then immediately drawn out, for that the etymology of the word seems to demand. Washing of sins is attributed to baptism; it is truly indeed attributed, but the signification is softer and slower than it can express baptism, which is rather a sign both of death and resurrection. Being moved by this reason, I would have those that are to be baptized to be altogether dipt into the water, as the word

doth sound, and the mystery doth signify.”*

Among modern reformers, Wesley and Whitefield both acknowledged immersion as a primitive mode of baptism. Whitefield in his notes on Romans vi:3, 4 uses this language: “It is certain that in these words there is an allusion to the manner of baptism which was by immersion, which is what our own church allows.” Perhaps few authorities more distinguished in his own field than Grotius could be named. Grotius says: “That this rite was wont to be performed by immersion and not by perfusion appears both by the propriety of the word and the places chosen for its administration, John iii:23; Acts viii:38, and by the many allusions of the Apostles, which cannot be referred to sprinkling, Romans vi:3, 4; Col. ii:12. The custom of perfusion or aspersion seems to have obtained sometime after, in favor of such who lying dangerously ill were desirous

*Opera, Vol. I. 336.

to dedicate themselves to Christ. These were called *Clinics* by other Christians. See Cyprian's epistle to Magnus to this purpose. Nor should we wonder that the old Latin word *tingo* does properly and generally signify the same as *mersare* to immerse or plunge.*

Salmasius uses similar language: "Baptism," he says, "is immersion and was administered in former times according to the force and meaning of the word."†

Among other authorities who take the same position, may be named: Casaubon, Dionysius Petavius, Vitringa, Hospinianus, Zanchius, Alstedius, Witsius, Gurtlerus, Baddaeus, Venema, Vossius and Scholz. Bishop Bossuet states the case on this wise: "To baptize signifies to plunge, as is granted by all the world."

Dr. Wall, although maintaining that other modes besides immersion are valid and that, in extraordinary cases, were

*Matt. III., 6. Gale.

†De Caesarie Virorum, P. 669.

permitted from very primitive time, Novatian being the first mentioned, nonetheless inclines very strongly toward the primitive mode as being the best to use today. He says:

“Their general (referring to the primitive church) and ordinary way was to baptize by immersion, or dipping the person, whether it were an infant or grown man or woman, into the water. This is so plain and clear by an infinite number of passages, that as one can not but pity the weak endeavors of such paedo-baptists as would maintain the negative of it; so, also, we ought to disown and show a dislike of the profane scoffs which some people give to the English anti-paedo-baptists, merely for their use of dipping. It is one thing to maintain that that circumstance is not absolutely necessary to the essence of baptism; and another to go about to represent it as ridiculous and foolish, or as shameful and indecent; when it was in all probability the way by which our

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blessed Saviour, and, for certain, was the most usual and ordinary way by which the ancient Christians did receive their baptism, I shall not stay to produce the particular proofs of this. Many of the quotations which I brought for other purposes, and shall bring, do evince it. It is a great want of prudence, as well as of honesty, to refuse to grant to an adversary what is certainly true, and may be proved so. It creates a jealousy of all the rest that one says:"*

The citation of further authorities would seem to be burdensome and scarcely worth while. The evidence has been summed up in one of the most recent of modern books of reference as follows: "There is little doubt that the original practise was immersion (Matt. iii:6, 16; Acts viii:38), but it is equally undeniable that sprinkling or affusion was sometimes substituted at a very early period."†

*History of Infant Baptism, Part II, Chapter ix.

†Nelson's Encyclopedia, Article on Baptism.



VI
OBJECTIONS

VI

OBJECTIONS

The use of immersion as the act of Christian baptism has been opposed on various grounds. One of the principal objections has always come from those who, believing in the mysterious and sacramental efficacy of the rite, and finding it impossible to administer by immersion in extreme cases, held it necessary to use some other form. The first recorded instance of affusion seems to have been brought about in this way. The sick Novatian was sprinkled because he could not be immersed. The dogma of no possible salvation without an external baptism necessarily leads to this position. It seems strange, however, that with the development of modern freedom and the almost universal recognition of moral quality as attaching to the intent and purpose rather than the external action, it should be deemed necessary to destroy the symbolism and change the character

of the ordinance in order to make it possible for all to yield a formal obedience. Assuredly a repentance which is genuine and sincere and a real and unfeigned bowing of the spirit to the commands of our Lord, from a moral point of view, carries with it quite as much significance as any sort of substitution for the external act of baptism. In other words, the man who, spiritually, is prepared for baptism and desires it, but for physical reasons cannot receive it externally, has, from the moral viewpoint, as effectually received it as though the external rite had been administered, especially in a substitute form. This does not, of course, for a moment, excuse the man who *can* submit to the external form, from any failure to do so. It simply says that the all-righteous God will not demand a physical impossibility from his followers. To change the entire character of the ordinance, however, in order to enable all to yield a formal obedience to it, is clearly to sacrifice something of

larger significance in order to satisfy a formal requirement. It comes dangerously near that substitution of external rites and ceremonies for moral worth and values, which has ever been the greatest foe the church has found within her borders.

There is, therefore, no need to sacrifice the original symbolism and character of the ordinance in order to make it universal in its external application.

It may be said, however, that the true position at this point would be to return to the old theory which required immersion wherever practicable, but *permitted* affusion where immersion could not be performed. The best answer to this position is the voice of history itself. Affusion when permitted speedily becomes universal, just as in almost every religious communion which has permitted one of three forms, the easiest of the three to administer has soon taken the place of the other two. Very few communions today which admit three modes for bap-

tism, find it necessary to even provide convenient means for the administration of the ordinance by more than one form. It is a matter well known to all that baptisteries are rarely built in church buildings where immersion is not the sole and ruling practice. To concede affusion therefore in extreme cases, means ultimately to concede it in all others.

A second objection frequently urged is that the practise of immersion is dangerous to health and unbecoming modern ideas of propriety.

Many authorities have indeed assumed that the substitution of affusion for immersion came about when the Gospel was carried to colder climes than Judea and that the same principle which made the Son of Man Lord even of the Sabbath Day made it proper to change the form of the ordinance when circumstances made such a change necessary. Bishop Burnet, for example, says, "The danger of dipping in cold climates may be a very good reason for changing the

form of baptism to sprinkling." Such authorities, however, seem blind to the fact that affusion, as a matter of history, began almost uniformly in warmer climates, and that the colder ones have been the last to give up immersion. England, for instance, used the ancient form pretty universally, long after the custom had been given up in Italy, Spain and France. Russia is perhaps the coldest country in Europe, and yet Russia has always practised immersion and practises it at the present time. Where the ordinance is properly and carefully administered, it has certainly proven to be of no detriment to the health of the candidate. As for the unbecomingness of the rite, when administered with its proper solemnity, there is no more impressive or beautiful service in the ritual of Christendom. Like every other formal element in religion, proper care and due preparation must be used in its administration; but where this is done, the superb symbolism which is the very core

of the ordinance, speaks with inexpressible power to every heart and proclaims the death, burial and resurrection of Christ with mute but awe-inspiring solemnity.

Perhaps the consideration which has had more to do with the adoption of affusion than anything else has been the feeling, dating largely from Calvin's day, that the external form is of trifling significance at best, and that therefore, being a matter of indifference, the most convenient form is the one most worthy of adoption. To the careful thinker, however, when the matter is probed to the bottom, it will be seen that this position is fraught with serious danger to the ultimate harmony of the Church. Freedom of thought is indeed imperative in religion; but as regards action, what is needed is not a choice of diverse methods with the consequent irresolution and uncertainty, but a definite, positive, and specific rite which all can comprehend and concerning which no possible doubt

can be found. There is a tremendous weight of authority which attaches to the words of the preacher who proclaims one baptism, certain, indubitable, beyond any possible question as to form, and in itself deeply appealing and significant. Nowhere in the world are people more deeply concerned in securing absolute certainty than they are in matters pertaining to religion. It is not therefore a trifling consideration that in the case of the initial ordinance of Christianity a matter of mere convenience should be allowed to set aside not only the essential symbolism of the rite, but also the uniform practise of the New Testament Church. The Church must always lose by such a substitution. What she should insist upon, on the contrary, is *the greatest possible freedom in regard to thought and opinion, and the greatest possible certainty in regard to action and ordinance*. An ordinance partakes of the nature of a law; and the best laws are those which are most specific, and admit

of the least variation or equivocation in the process of administration.

Another important consideration of immense practical significance, especially as regards the unity of Christendom, is the fact that immersion, to those who really believe in it, is a matter of deep personal conviction, while other forms are held more lightly by those who practise them. In other words, the immersionist honestly believes that immersion is necessary to the act of Christian baptism, while the affusionist does not thus regard either sprinkling or pouring. It is a matter of conscience with the one, and of convenience with the other. Perhaps the immersionist is mistaken in his view of affusion, but even should he prove to be so, the affusionist has sacrificed no real principle in accepting the common ground upon which his brother stands. The difficulty here is not one of opinion, but of fact. The act of baptism is not a speculative consideration; it is a literal external performance. However

much men may honestly differ in regard to opinions, when once convinced of the character of an external happening there is really no honest recourse except to state the fact just as it is, or appears to them to be. In other words, if I am convinced by what I regard as indubitable testimony that a certain duel was actually fought with pistols, no amount of kindly feeling toward an opponent in argument could make me in honesty say that I believed that any other weapons save pistols were used. The immersionist believes it to be true that the ordinance of baptism in its essentially symbolic nature demands immersion; he believes it to be a fact that our Lord Jesus Christ, though it was unnecessary for Him, yet in order "to fulfill all righteousness," was immersed in the river Jordan; he believes it to be a fact that the uniform practise of the New Testament church was immersion. Perhaps he is wrong in these views, but as his conclusions are based

upon evidence and as the matter is one of fact it would do violence to his conceptions of intellectual honesty for him to acknowledge that to be true which he does not believe to be true, or that to be a fact which he does not believe took place. The immersionist should not be accused of a lack of charity, where that charity can be bought only at the price of conscience. The Apostle says indeed that we must "speak the truth in love," but at all times he certainly advocates our speaking the truth.

The immersionist has, however, much to answer for because of his lack of charity in expression. The very fact that he believes his position to be true ought to make him all the more kind and courteous in his expression of the truth. That logic which is not tempered by love is capable of doing the world great injury and harm. All men have emotions as well as intellects, and a man convinced against his will is not convinced at all. Baptism is not the only thing in the

Christian religion; and while intellectual honesty may demand my adherence to a certain position, it does not require that I should lack the kindest and most charitable feelings toward those who disagree with me. Recognizing fully *their* right to an honest conviction upon the subject, and respecting that conviction as completely as the spirit of Christian love demands, there ought to be some way for us to harmonize our convictions so as to secure the greatest measure of unity without any sacrifice of conscience on either side. That differences in regard to baptism are not all matters of logic is shown by the great difficulty in getting immersionist bodies to harmonize among themselves. When we get rid of the unworthy motives which keep us as Christians apart, the honest differences of conviction will soon adjust themselves. Jealousy, unworthy ambition, material considerations and interests, selfish promptings and motives—these things are what we all need to conquer in order

that the church of Christ may again be one. May we all pray without ceasing that we shall be enabled to further the great desire of our Lord that His followers shall become one in the Father and in Him, to the end that the world may believe His divine message and gospel!

VII

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

VII

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

Whatever else may be said of the present paper, it is the earnest wish and prayer of the author that its spirit may breathe that Christian love which is indispensable in any worthy presentation of a subject upon which followers of the Lord Jesus Christ fail to agree. Personally, it would be a great joy to concede anything which keeps Christians of the present day apart, were such a concession consistent with the maintenance of intellectual integrity. In other words, if the writer *could* believe that Christian baptism means other than he has tried to indicate, he should be only too happy to make the concession. The matter is one of evidence, however; and a decision which does not proceed from the evidence is of no consequence or value. Feeling as he does, he nonetheless earnestly desires to promote the fullest fraternal relations among all who claim to be

followers of the Christ; nor do his views upon baptism in the least interfere with such a position. Baptism is only a part of Formal Christianity and however important in its place should not be allowed to negate the recognition of other Christian characteristics. Whoever is realizing Christ in his own life from day to day is a Christian in the vital and fundamental sense, whether in the full formal sense or not.

There would seem to be no reason, it is true, why a person should not be both in the formal and vital sense of the term a follower of Christ. In other words, the fact that I live the Christian life without yielding, in the full and complete sense, obedience to the Christian sacraments and formal requirements, is no reason why I should not yield to the latter. Nor is it any reason why my failure to do so should not be recognized simply as what it is. A man may be a Christian in a more complete and in a less complete sense of the term,

and the fact that he is less complete should not cause one to advocate the lesser completeness as equal to, or greater than, the fuller measure of conformity.

When Christians laying aside all strife and vain-glory, all selfish desire and ambition, all thoughts of material gain and advantage, come together as brothers, earnestly striving to agree wherever possible, and wherever unable to agree to at least disagree in the spirit of love and fraternity, in a short while our problems of division will be very largely solved.

Equally important too, with the above, is the honest effort of Christian bodies to understand each other, and to receive authoritative information instead of haphazard reports when passing estimates upon each other's opinions. Courtesy no less than Christian charity demands this; and yet too often, in the religious world, it is disregarded. Christians of diverse communions and bodies ought not to treat their neighbors as enemies, against

whom any rhetorical or forensic advantage is fair, but rather as friends whose honest opinions and beliefs should be at least respected even where they cannot be endorsed. With a fair understanding of each other, many of our points of difference will disappear, and those which do not disappear will become less serious as we come to respect each other more.

At the beginning of the Christian era there was one church. This church, the primitive apostolic model, gradually assumed different forms and so there arose churches of different sections and nations. In this way, there came to be a Roman Church, a Greek Church, an English Church and the like, all of them versions as it were of the primitive apostolic church. After a time these churches, at least in the West, largely attained unity under the direction and leadership of the Bishop of Rome. The unity attained was, however, the unity of authority and coercion, and ere long the

spirit of liberty which is one of the choicest gifts of true Christianity, broke forth in the mighty struggles of the Protestant Reformation. The Christian world has won freedom, but it has again lost unity. The problem now before it is to secure unity and still retain freedom as an element. No one who believes in the divine kingship of Jesus can doubt that this problem will some day be solved. Again Christians of all nations and climes will be found in a united church, as in the days of the Apostles; and then the Cross will achieve a new and greater world conquest than before. Let us pray that that day may soon appear.

— When the Church of Christ, Universal, is seen once more in visible, external form, and as a united triumphant power, then, and not until then, she will conquer the world. There will be healing in her wings for the open sores of humanity. There will be joy in her accents for the sorrowing hearts of the desolate. There will be hope and inspiration in

her message for all who are downtrodden and oppressed. And when that time comes, then and then alone, will the words of the prophet reach their triumphant fulfillment. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Finis

Almighty God, Who in Thine infinite goodness hast granted to man a portion of Thine own Spirit, and Who hast implanted within the human heart that longing, inexpressible and divine, which impels us to look up to Thee and cry, Abba Father,—Give us we pray Thee that sense of brotherhood which will bring us nearer unto each other and likewise nearer unto Thee. Help us to conquer the unworthy things which separate us and grant us grace to wear the name of our Master worthily of Him Who prayed that we should all be one in Him and in Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

ADDENDA

I

INFANT BAPTISM

I

INFANT BAPTISM

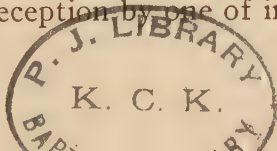
The question of the baptism of infants has been touched upon by implication alone in the present study. Two reasons have governed the writer's action in the matter. The first is that if the analysis already made is correct, all who are unable, for any reason, to fulfill the necessary pre-requisites of baptism are not logically subjects prepared to receive the ordinance. The second reason is based upon those peculiarly sympathetic and emotional associations which cluster around the font and the christening rites in many communions, and for which we have only unbounded respect, even though the stern and pitiless logic of fact does not permit us to accept them. It seemed wrongful to trample upon these feelings more than the actual situation demanded.

There can be no question, however, in the judgment of the writer, that the New

Testament clearly announces no baptism save that of adults. It is true that by implication it is possible to include infants, as in the cases of the household baptisms to which reference is made in the Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere. The implication here would furnish a presumption, were it not for the fact that the whole logic of the baptismal ordinance, as the final external symbolical rite admitting a penitent believer into the church, makes against the presumption. In the face of this logic, the presumption (which at best is not strong, since only a few households are named and there are many households in which we find no infants today) cannot, we think, in all fairness hold. In other words, if infant baptism is really baptism, then our whole analysis of the ordinance as contained in the preceding pages falls to the ground. The objection to extending the sacrament of baptism so as to include infants is based not so much upon a lack of positive authority in the Scrip-

tures for so doing, although there is decidedly such a lack, as it is upon an essential contradiction of the character of the ordinance, if it is applied to those who are irresponsible.

Having made the above statements, the fact remains that some rite analogous to christening would seem to be a very desirable thing for Christianity. That those who can not accept infant baptism have often erred grievously in properly training their children for the church, there can be no question. New and approved Sunday School methods, the cradle roll and other similar devices testify abundantly to this fact. With the fullest and heartiest approval of that loving solicitude and care which prompts the parent to bring his or her child to the altar and which causes the minister to desire to bring the child into the full pale of the church, we must respectfully refuse to so change the Scriptural meaning and character of the ordinance of baptism as to admit of its reception by one of infant



years. There is a field here, however, which demands our prayerful attention and consideration. The children of Christian parents should be brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Every holy influence should be thrown around them; and no step which will tend to keep their feet in the path which leads toward the Christ goal, should be omitted. Baptists have much to learn from paedobaptists in this particular, while paedobaptists should carefully examine the Scriptures in order to discover whether in seeking a perfectly righteous and legitimate goal they have not used an unauthorized means by which to reach it.

There seems to be little doubt, we may be permitted to add, that the compelling motive in extending the ordinance of baptism to infants lay in the first place in the dogma of infant damnation. The belief in the power of an external rite to cleanse the soul and save it from an endless perdition is clearly at the bottom of the question. When people began to be-

lieve, as they did early in the history of the church, that all mankind, by virtue of the dogma of original sin, was hopelessly condemned and that some religious rite could by a mysterious or magical process remove the condemnation, naturally they came to place immense significance upon this particular rite. It has not been very long since many Protestant churches held, theoretically at least, to the dogma of infant condemnation. Nowadays, however, very few ministers or laymen in any Christian communion accept it. It is recognized everywhere that the only ultimate desert is moral and that mechanical actions are not a part of the moral universe. The unbaptized infant, so far as it is personally concerned, is quite as much a citizen of the moral world as the baptized infant. We do not mean to discuss the theological implications of these facts, as we have great respect for every Christian's honest theological views, and an earnest desire that he shall be allowed

the fullest possible freedom in them; but we are simply trying to state the facts.

Summing up, therefore, we find that there are primarily two arguments for infant baptism. The first, and originally by far the most compelling, is or was based upon the dogmas of original sin, total depravity and infant condemnation. The second is the real necessity for care and oversight of the child as regards his spiritual relations. Time has practically removed the first argument; the second, as has been already noted, is still of full force, but does not demand that we shall violate the spirit of the ordinance of baptism in order to satisfy the requirements of spiritual nurture and care.

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THE ADMINISTRATOR OF
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The Scriptural teaching in regard to the administrator of baptism is exceptionally brief. In fact, there is practically nothing of a positive character dealing with the subject to be adduced from the New Testament. The Great Commission certainly commands its subjects to go everywhere and to baptize. If we understand the terms of the Commission as applying to all Christians, it is difficult to see how the obligation to proclaim the Gospel is to be separated from the obligation to administer baptism.

After St. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, it is stated that the three thousand converts were baptized, but it is not stated who administered the ordinance. Obviously the Twelve alone may have officiated, or (so far as the text is concerned) others of the One Hundred and Twenty may have acted in the place of the Twelve or

as their assistants. In the account of the conversion of the Samaritans as recorded in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, while there is no positive statement as to the administrator of the ordinance, there is an inference amounting almost to certainty that it was either Philip or some one else other than the Twelve. The fourteenth verse says, "Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John;" and in verse sixteen of the same chapter it is stated that the Holy Spirit had as yet fallen on none of them, "only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus." Had any of the Twelve baptized the Samaritans, there would have been no need for Peter and John to be sent to Samaria. Indubitable evidence of Philip's baptismal powers is given, moreover, in the eighth chapter of the Acts where he unquestionably administered the ordinance of baptism to the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip's

office in the early church was that of deacon and later of evangelist. So, also, when afterward Saul of Tarsus was baptized, the man who presumably at least administered the ordinance is characterized simply as Ananias, "a certain disciple at Damascus." Paul himself in writing to the Corinthian church, after mentioning a few specific cases in which he officiated, states that (1 Cor. i:17) "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel," inferring that the administration of the ordinance was by no means the special prerogative of an apostle, but that it might be, and in fact properly was, the duty of other Christians.

In the eleventh chapter of the Acts it is stated that the disciples, who were scattered abroad after the persecution of Stephen, traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus preaching the gospel though only to the Jews. A little later some of them, "men of Cyprus and Cyrene," when they came to Antioch, preached to the Gentiles also with the result (Acts xi:21)

that a "great number that believed turned unto the Lord." It is inconceivable that these early converts constituting the nucleus of the great church at Antioch were unbaptized before the arrival of Barnabas, who came to them later and "added much people," after his coming.

There seems therefore, judging from the New Testament precedent, no reason why Christian baptism should not be administered by a disciple of Christ who is qualified in any way to proclaim the Gospel.

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